



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**  
St. Louis District®

# Press Release

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Contact: Alan Dooley (314) 331-8002

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1222 Spruce Street, St. Louis, Missouri 63103-2833

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## Mark Twain Lake and Clarence Cannon Dam Save 20,000 Acres of Salt River Valley Crops Over Weekend

Mark Twain Lake, northwest of St. Louis, is a multi-purpose facility that provides recreation, water supply, environmental support and most importantly this past weekend, flood damage reduction.

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers water control engineers are reporting that the series of heavy rains pounded the region late last week and into the weekend created conditions for a costly agricultural disaster in an area downstream on the Salt River watershed. Allowed simply to run off unimpeded, the rain would have damaged or destroyed more than 20,000 acres of prime farmland, heavily laden with a bumper crop of corn, soy beans and other products. But the water was contained by the Corps' Mark Twain Lake and Clarence Cannon Dam. The lake and dam were placed in operation by the Corps in August 1983.

Corps economists calculated that without Mark Twain Lake, an estimated 20,200 acres of crops and nearly \$3.4 million might have been lost.

As the rain continued, the lake's elevation rapidly rose above 618 feet, more than 12 feet above the normal regulated summer height. According to Dave Busse, the St. Louis District's chief potamologist (river engineer), combined with well above-average flows from Salt River tributaries downstream, it is likely when the water reached the Mississippi River downstream, the Mississippi would have reached flood stage around Louisiana, Missouri, possibly causing additional damage in that area.

Busse noted, "To put that in perspective, at the peak of the storms this weekend, more than 48,000 cubic feet of water were draining into the lake each second. That's more than was flowing down the Mississippi River at Louisiana at the time. Left to run down the Salt as fast as it fell, that would have caused significant flash flooding."

But Busse said the greatest immediate impact was in fact, a lack of impact: "A lot of crops for which farmers have worked hard all summer, and which are almost ready for harvest, probably would have been lost. But they are intact"

"We played a delicate balancing act," Busse went on. "We staved off flood damage downstream without creating a problem at Mark Twain Lake for on of the busiest weekends of the summer, Labor Day weekend. Mark Twain Lake captured and held more than a quarter million acre feet of water during these storms."

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## 2-2-2-2 Lake Saves Crops

Even though Mark Twain Lake is predicted to approach elevations near 620 feet early this week, which could cause beach damage, Busse downplayed that possibility. He said that with this week's good weather and a planned discharge rate that will continue to protect crops, the lake will be lowered to excellent levels for recreation before the weekend.

Busse grinned when asked about releases through the dam. "The dam includes the Clarence Cannon Power Plant. After capturing the water and saving the fields, now we are running the same water through hydroelectric generators and creating a steady 60 megawatts of electricity. We'll sell the electricity, put the money in the U.S Treasury, have a wonderful weekend and a great harvest. There will be no losers – only winners."

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### **Editors note:**

Area citizens planning to spend all or part of the final days of the Labor Day weekend at Army Corps of Engineers Lakes in the St. Louis District can call the following numbers for latest lake conditions and things to do:

Mark Twain Lake, MO:	573-735-4097
Wappapello Lake, MO:	573-222-8562
Lake Shelbyville, IL:	217-774-3867
Carlyle Lake, IL:	618-594-2484
Rend Lake, IL:	618-724-2493